

JOSEF KRAMER

To:

Field Marshal Montgomery,  
British Army of the Rhine.

Field Marshal,

On 17th November 1945 I was condemned to death by the Military Court at Luneburg. I have not been informed of the reasons on which this verdict was based. I take the liberty, Field Marshal, of addressing to you a request for a further reconsideration of the verdict. I wish to show my innocence as follows.

BE GEN BELSEN CHARGE.

At the time of the arrival of the English troops on 15th April 1945 Belsen Camp was in a very bad state. It is not my fault that on that day there were only weak and starved prisoners and that the camp was so terribly overcrowded. Early on I made several protests to my head office in BERLIN ORANIENBURG and I made it quite clear what would be the consequences of such a course of action. In spite of this countless transports of sick and exhausted prisoners from other camps kept arriving. With the few facilities at my disposal I continuously strove to prevent the worst happening. That I was not successful in overcoming the disasters was not due to negligence on my part, but was the result of the great restrictions of the long war. It is my former superiors who should bear the responsibility for the terrible conditions in Bergen Belsen and the resultant consequences, for they well knew the situation. All I had to do as a soldier was to carry out my orders. By sacrificing myself I did my duty up to the last day. Loyally and conscientiously I remained at my post until the hand over to English troops. Unlike the others, cowardly and with no sense of responsibility, I did not escape, but remained in the camp awaiting the arrival of the English troops. Whilst the others were concerned for their own personal safety, my only care was for the prisoners entrusted to me. Honestly and with a clear conscience I can say that I never for a second thought of myself. I was myself greatly oppressed by the bad conditions at Belsen, and even more by the fact that I could do nothing to help.

AUSCHWITZ CHARGE.

I was Commandant of Auschwitz II from 10/15th May 1944 until the end of November 1944. At that date the Gas Chambers had already been there for many years. Although these installations were in my camp area, yet I had no control over them. All orders concerning transports and selections for the Gas Chamber originated from the Commandant Auschwitz I as Garrison Commander. I did not agree with the gassing of the Jews - but it would have been quite useless to have protested: one would have only risked one's own existence without in any way affecting the carrying out of the liquidation policy. I have never taken an active part in these selections. If former prisoners today state otherwise I can only put it down to feelings of hatred. If it be that I was found guilty in spite of the above statements then this is based on a mistake. I personally am not guilty of the death of a single person of any race or nationality by means of the Auschwitz Gas Chambers. That and nothing else is the plain truth.

WAR CRIMES AND INTERNATIONAL LAW.

Although I had nothing to do with the war I am indicted as a War Criminal. I made several voluntary applications to be sent to the front but they were turned down. As was pointed out to the Court by the English expert in War Crimes and International Law Prof. Smith of London University, the Concentration Camps in Germany had already existed many years before the war and cannot be considered as War Crimes. Further Prof. Smith proved Categorically that when there is a conflict between International Law and Domestic Law the latter prevails. This decision appears in the Law Books of England, America, France and Germany. The J.A.G. Stirling did not deal at all with these important points. It was his duty to give a decision in the matter

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and I am convinced that if that had been done the verdict would have been quite different, because the Court would have started from quite a different assumptions.

Field Marshal.

I wish now to sum up my petition.

- (1) I am NOT GUILTY of the crimes concerning Bergen Belsen or Auschwitz which have been laid against me.
- (2) I am not a War Criminal.
- (3) I have never killed a person on my own initiative.
- (4) I am but a soldier carrying out the orders of my military superiors.

By taking into account the above points, which are nothing but the whole truth, I beg you Field Marshal, once more to reconsider the verdict passed against me.

JOSEF KRAMER